

SOUTHALL LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER NUMBER ELEVEN

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PEOPLE NOT THINGS

Imagine you are in conversation with a friend or acquaintance who is a stranger to these parts, and to fill up an awkward pause you mention your interest in local history. "Ah," says your companion, "so you do have some local interest in the subject, doubtless you learn a great deal by visiting your local ancient ruins and old houses, is your town well-endowed with such relics?" "Ruins, no," you reply, "but we do have our historic buildings, we have the Manor House, Grove House, Park House, and, er..., and ...the Manor House..." Upon further reflection you hastily add a word about Norwood Church and the Plough Inn, but nevertheless it is at this juncture that you receive the full realization that some fifty years ago, when the developers and redevelopers were in their uncontrolled heyday, Southall must have been the prime target for their attentions. Nothing must stand in the way of progress, provided it guaranteed a good financial return. If a fine Georgian mansion stood in the way of this admirable intention then buy it and knock it down. It may well be that the majority of the Southall mansions were not worth keeping anyway - this we do not know, as it seems that few records or photographs exist, but it is very doubtful if in most cases the replacement was an improvement on the original.

With these thoughts in mind, you become despondent and incline to the view that Southall has nothing to offer in, the way of historical research, but here I suggest you fall into a very common but fundamental error. What is important is not that a given object no longer, exists, but that at some period in time it did exist; but even this is not the prime consideration. Buildings are erected and objects manufactured because someone, somewhere, thought it good to erect or manufacture, and in this connection it, is good to remember that the word "manufacture" originally meant "made by hand".

The study of history is the study of man, his thought, reasoning, and his actions consequent thereon. What is left by man is merely a means of furthering our understanding of man himself. So it is with local history, too much can be made of old bricks and mortar and not enough of our former Southallians, Most of us are familiar with such names as Henry Baxter of Baxter's Farm, Mr. Thomas of the Manor House Ben Hanson, a colourful figure if ever there was one, Mr. Abbot the beehive maker, E.J. Ham our one pictorial chronicler, and many others, but what do we know of these men? Owing to the efforts of this Society, we have learned something of the Awsiters, the Biscoe's and the Martin Brothers, but so much more remains to be done.

Perhaps the most significant part of Southall's history has been packed into the last eighty or ninety years, so, if your family has been around these parts for a few generations, why not write your family story and let us print it - you can always leave out the bit that caused uncle's picture to be turned to the wall, although we would much rather print the unexpurgated version. If you feel that your own family story lacks interest - although in this I feel sure you are wrong - why not try someone else's? If you approach your committee they will be only too ready to suggest a name (not their own) and the best means of achieving this worthwhile end,

NOTES AND VIEWS

Before commenting on the Winter Programme, a few lines on the visit to the excavations at Northolt. The Committee have every reason to feel satisfied with their efforts on this occasion. In the first place, the event ran exactly to schedule; secondly the visit was very well supported; thirdly the evening was fine (the Committee will no doubt claim credit for this also). Finally, our good friend Charles Keene and his good lady put on such a fine tour and exhibition.

It was but to be expected that after this visit some members of our Society developed the urge to find a potential site in Southall and to start a-digging. Rumour has it that developments in this direction are afoot and the President and Chairman have been seen tramping around in odd places. One wonders how many members would be seriously interested in carrying out an excavation programme.

There are promising prospects of Ealing having an Arts Council, and at the time of writing a caretaker Committee has been set up to carry out the initial organisation. It is important that Southall organisations should support the Arts Council in every way possible, otherwise we shall be hearing the cry that Southall is left out in the cold whilst Ealing gets all the benefits. Only by regular representation on the Council can we be assured of its success.

Already the programme for 1966 is being completed, and it is no easy task to fill twelve months' meetings as much as sixteen months in advance. It is, of course, inevitable that one or two changes occur during the year. I often feel that we are inclined to take our very efficient Hon. Sec. for granted; that a programme ever comes to fruition is in no small part due to a lot of hard work in her direction.

THE OLD BRIDGE SCHOOL, NORWOOD ROAD

To the Editor,

In Newsletter No.7, Spring 1964, mention was made of the old Bridge School. I can just remember it being used as a school and having seen the boys and girls playing in the school playground. At that time it had been for many years the school provided for the education of the children living south of the Great Western Railway line, and North Road School was the fount of knowledge for those scholars residing north of the line.

Mr. John Wark, my great grandfather, was the headmaster at North Road School, and his daughter was for some time the organist at St. Mary's Church, Norwood Green. This lady later married "Ben" Hanson, the youngest son of John Hanson who had already established the builders business in Featherstone Road.

Five of Ben's six sons attended the Old Bridge School during the period from about 1877 to the late 1880's. The three elder boys, Harry, Frank and Arthur went on to Boarding School at Bristol, but Phil and George, as my memory serves me, finished their education at the Bridge School.

When the School was rendered obsolete by the erection of Clifton Road School, the building became the headquarters of the 1st. Southall Scout Troop (Lady Jersey's Own). I well remember this troop being formed about 1911. Every Sunday they marched from their headquarters at the Old School to St. Mary's Church, where they formed a guard of honour for the then Lady Jersey as she and her family entered the church. They were a very good troop with a large contingent of boys, they were always ready to help in any worth-while cause in Southall-Norwood and district. They also formed a band, which was, I believe, composed of fifes and drums (This is indeed true- ed.) The Scoutmaster was a Mr. Jubb, and as far as I can remember, the Assistant Scoutmaster was a Mr. Arthur Collins; when the 1914 war broke out Mr. Collins joined the forces and Mr. Jubb's two sons assisted their father. Eventually they too joined up, and gradually the older lads in the troop did likewise, and the troop was either moved to other quarters or disbanded.

After the War Mr. Stanley Goddard (of the family of that name who lived at Norwood Court) built a front on the old school-house, and opened the "Reliable Garage". Incidentally, Norwood Court, a very old and picturesque house was once the home of a member of the famous Wedgewood family, but whether the pottery industry was carried on there or not I cannot say. Perhaps you have some old records, or one of your readers may throw light on this.

(Mrs) K. H. Scott
Bampton, Devon.

We are indeed very grateful to Mrs. Scott for this letter; we hope that it will inspire others to reminisce in this delightful fashion. Mrs. Scott's memory serves her well in the matter of the Lady Jersey's Own Scouts. Mr. Jubb was indeed the Scoutmaster, but he did have two Assistant Scoutmasters, one was, as she rightly says, Mr. Arthur Collins, but there was also a Mr. G.E. Wheeler. Mrs. Scott may be interested to know that both of these worthy gentlemen are still with us, and only a year or so ago Arthur Collins was seen attending a local scout parade. I am very happy to record that Mrs. Scott was not quite correct in thinking the troop disbanded, it carried on in the true Baden Powell tradition, and has a record of service in two wars. In 1961 it celebrated it's Golden Jubilee. (Obviously there's quite a story here - any offers for the writing, thereof?)

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The year is drawing all too rapidly to a close, and this means that the Annual General Meeting is not far off. Now, as you well know, we do not prolong the formal business of the evening longer than necessary, and indeed this year we hope to stage a very informal "Brains Trust", this following the election of the new committee and officers. This means that you do not have to sit through an entire evening of formal business, but we do ask you to show your interest in your, society by first of all returning the nomination papers that will be sent to you, and then by attending the Annual General Meeting. Normally we have a good attendance but a disappointing number of returned nominations. Each year I make an appeal for a good response, but upon each occasion over two thirds of the membership fail to respond.

As the names of the present committee members are printed on the Programme, you are at least familiar with their identities, but doubtless you have knowledge of someone in our membership who you would consider to be a valuable asset to a committee, why not speak to him (or her) and secure their permission to present their nomination?

To our great regret, Mr. Jordan's commitments in the Borough have forced him to resign his position as Recorder to the Southall Local History Society, and shall sadly miss his support and advice. It was Mr. Jordan's interest and assistance that helped to create the Society in 1958.

Happily we are extremely pleased to announce the acceptance of this office by Mr. McNae, the Librarian at Southall Central Library, and the Committee members were more than pleased to meet him at their meeting in September. We do hope that his association with us will be a long and fruitful one.

THE ROYAL HOSPITAL SCHOOL
HOLBROOK, SUFFOLK.

Situated on the beautiful Stour estuary in East Suffolk is the Royal Hospital School. It may surprise many people to learn that the present building has a link with history dating back to the seventeenth century and the reign of William and Mary.

The Royal Hospital at Greenwich was founded by William and Mary in 1694 as a thank offering for the victory over the French fleet at La Hogue, and in addition to providing a home for naval pensioners was intended to maintain and educate children of seamen killed or disabled in that action. However, the revenue of the hospital did not at first make it possible to carry out the education of children because of the cost of Wren's magnificent buildings and the accepted date for the foundation of the school is therefore 1712. The subjects taught included mathematics, drawing, fencing, dancing, music, and later on, navigation.

The first school regulations date from 1731 when 60 boys were in residence in the Queen Anne block of the hospital. To enter the school a boy had to be between the ages of 11 and 13, sound in mind and body, able to read, the son of a seaman or pensioner, and must conform to the rules of the school. It was laid down that each boy shall have an everyday jacket and serge waistcoat, made out of the pensioners' old clothes, as often as needful; and an Irish Ram Skin pair of breeches once in two years. Each boy shall have a clean shirt, neck and a pair of hose once a week; pillow-case once a month; and towel as often as necessary. The most serious punishment was to be sent on board the receiving Ships at the Tower to serve in the Royal Navy as pressed men not as privileged entry.

In 1798 a charity school for younger children was started at Paddington and called "The British Endeavour", and after receiving official support (Lord Nelson was a member of the committee) and royal patronage in 1805, was renamed "The Royal Naval Asylum". At this time the school was moved to the Queen's House at Greenwich and in order to accommodate the 700 boys and girls, aged between 5 and 12, two large wings were built and now comprise the National Maritime Museum, The routine was harsh as may be observed from the following order "The Quarter Master of Instruction shall cause the boys to rise by Beat of Drum at Six in the Morning, see that they wash themselves, attend prayers and then proceed to their classrooms". There is no mention of breakfast and one also wonders if this order applied to the girls.

It was considered absurd that two similar schools should continue as separate establishments and in 1821 they were amalgamated under the name of "The Naval Asylum". However, in 1825 it was ordered the title of Asylum be discontinued and be known as the Upper and Lower Schools of the Royal Hospital. Hence the name "Royal Hospital Schools" came into use but were officially called "Greenwich Hospital Schools" until 1892 when the form of Royal Hospital School was adopted. Boys entering the Upper School at 11 or 12 remained at school for three years before joining the Navy as mates or the Merchant Service, whilst those attending the Lower School left at the age of 15. The girl's school was not successful and was abandoned in 1841.

In order to improve the teaching of seamanship a block vessel of the brig class, fully rigged and armed, was installed in front of the Queen's House and named the "Fame"; it's figurehead is still a treasured possession of the School at Holbrook and occupies the southern end of the rifle range beneath the parade ground.

When, in 1869, Greenwich Hospital closed, control was transferred to the Board of Admiralty, It was found that in the interests of economy food had been much reduced so that the physical development of the boys was inferior to that of those attending neighbouring schools. Fewer boys were being accepted into the Navy so that one of the main objects of the school was not being fulfilled, but various reforms towards the end of the century improved matters.

The present school was built on the estate of nearly 900 acres at Holbrook, presented by Mr. Gifford Sherman Reade in 1921 to the Admiralty in gratitude for the fact that not one of his fleet of tea ships were sunk during the 1914-18 war. Upon his death in 1929 he left the residuary estate as an endowment for the school; a mosaic memorial has

been erected in the School Chapel commemorating his generosity. The foundation stone was laid in 1929 by the late King George VI when Duke of York, and the buildings were opened, in 1933 by the Duke of Windsor when Prince of Wales. The grounds consist of 150 acres with a home farm of 550 acres. Education has kept pace with the rising standards of education and the restriction on admission only to boys who intended to enter the Royal Navy was abandoned, although a career in the Navy, Marines, or Dockyards remains the first choice of a high proportion of school leavers. Up to 1957 the boys were maintained and education free by Greenwich Hospital but rising costs have made it necessary to introduce modest fees payable according to the means of the parents. The 660 odd boys are boarded in eleven houses, each bearing the name of a famous Admiral.

I have spent a number of week-ends at the Royal Hospital School but never at a time when the boys were in residence. However I hope this will be remedied at Whitsun. The boys parade on Sunday mornings before attending service in the beautiful Chapel. The school band consisting of 70 boys is always in great demand for local functions and in 1961, when H.M. the Queen visited Suffolk they were invited to play before Her Majesty at Ipswich.

J.E. Cooke

LOCAL INDUSTRIES IN WEST MIDDLESEX - A HISTORY

At the March meeting of the Southall Local History Society, the members had the good fortune to be addressed by the eminent local historian Dr. T. Lonsdale. His subject for the evening was "Local Industries in West Middlesex through the Ages."

The story commenced with a description of industry in this area under Roman occupation including the famous pottery works at Brockley Hill which manufactured a great proportion of the utensils used in Hertfordshire and Middlesex.

The Domesday Survey revealed no less than twenty four water mills in this area, these would all be of the "undershot" type where the water flowed under wheel. These mills were used for the grinding of charcoal and corn. Some mills were adapted for tripping a hammer to beat the locally grown flax.

In the 15th century water mills had been improved to the "Overshot" type rather similar to the mill that used to operate by the Mill Pond in the Greenford Road.

By the time the windmill was proving far more efficient, particularly for the grinding of corn, than the water mills, wind being far more prevalent in West Middlesex than fast flowing streams. Although at Poyle the water driven hammers beating the wood pulp to paper for many centuries, supplying initially the paper for the Westminster printing presses of William Caxton. The paper was transported down the river down the Thames then on to Westminster.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the forests of Middlesex were fast disappearing and coal, mined at Newcastle began to find its way by barge up as far as Uxbridge to be used in kilns etc.

The travelling bell founder made his appearance about this time, setting up his moulds in a field by the local church whilst the whole village had a public holiday for the event and the gentry would toss gold and silver coins into the molten metal. Very often the adjacent lane to the bell-founders field would thereafter be known as Bell Lane.

Eventually, the bell-founders settled in one place, like Thomas Swain of Longford who cast the bells of St. Marys Church, Norwood.

Records show that brick making commenced in Hounslow as early as the fifteenth century, whilst the brick fields of Southall prospered from about 1800 to 1920, moving westward across the area, the last brick works closing at Stockley in 1935.

It is well known that wheat from the wheat fields of Norwood and Heston, ground in the mill at Osterley, supplied flour to the Royal Household of Queen Elizabeth the First, and it was probably only a natural development for the same area to become, in later years, a market garden to supply the ever increasing demands of the exploding population of the Metropolis.

In thanking Dr. Lonsdale, the Chairman, Mr. A.J. Errington told the meeting that this, regrettably, was the Doctor's last official engagement before taking up residence at Bexhill.

On exhibition at the meeting was an old print of J.M.W. Turner's painting of Southall Windmill. The print had been presented to the Society by its President, Dr. Hector Smith, and was being re-presented to the Southall Central Library. It was particularly appropriate because the original painting of the Mill and the Grand Junction Canal came up for auction at the famous rooms of Christie's on Friday March 19th.

The picture depicts a "Post Mill" situated on the south bank of the canal about two hundred yards East of Three Bridges, although known at that time as "Windmill Bridge", there being no railway then. The Mill is clearly marked on John Ogilby's Map of 1675, but does not appear on the Ordnance Survey of 1840.

SPECIAL REMINDER

Members and friends are requested, when attending meetings at the Central Library, not to disturb people using the Reference Library before 8 p.m. The Reference Library must open for study until 8 p.m. and we can "move in" after it has closed. Your co-operation is earnestly requested in this matter. Thank you.

NOVEMBER MEETING

For the November Meeting we have managed to obtain the services of the official lecturer for the "National Trust", Mr.L.R. Townson. Mr. Townson will describe the work of the Trust and the properties managed by them. His talk will be illustrated and promises to be well up to our high standard. Please make it worth the while of Mr. Townson to come to Southall by not only coming yourself but also by bringing several of your friends.

FAREWELL TO STEAM

On Saturday November 20th we say farewell to an era of steam travel. On that day, at the hour of 9.18 in the morning, the last scheduled steam train leaves Paddington. The honour of being the final giant of steam to make this historic run will be the "Pendennis Castle". We will be grateful if all who have the interest and who are able to, will take transparencies from some local coign of vantage.